

SCHOOL INJURIES

Do You Know These Facts About School Injuries In Utah?

- ❖ *Every hour* a student is injured at school.
- ❖ *Every 4 hours* a student suffers an injury resulting in a possible fracture.
- ❖ *Every day* a school employee calls 9-1-1 because of a school injury.
- ❖ *Every day* a student suffers a possible concussion due to a school injury.
- ❖ *Every 3 days* a student loses consciousness as the result of a school injury.
- ❖ *Every 5 days* a child is hospitalized after suffering a school injury.

UTAH SCHOOL INJURY REPORT TREND DATA (1997-2002) GRADES K-12

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

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| WHO | ▪ Injuries occur more often among boys (61%). |
| WHAT | ▪ Fractures and possible fractures occur more often than all other types of injury (31%). |
| WHEN | ▪ From 1997-2002, the Violence and Injury Prevention Program (VIPP) received 32,886 injury reports that met criteria*. |
| WHERE | ▪ In grades K-6, the majority of reported injuries occur on the playground/playfield (68%). In grades 7-12, the majority occur in the gym or on the athletic field (44%). |
| WHY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inadequate supervision ▪ Risk-taking behaviors among students ▪ Poor decision-making skills among students ▪ Inadequately maintained equipment ▪ Inadequate staff training in injury prevention ▪ Lack of conditioning |

*All reportable injuries meet the following criteria: Any injury that is severe enough to cause the loss of one-half day or more of school and/or warrants medical attention and professional treatment (e.g., nurse, M.D., ER staff, etc.).

THE HIGH COST OF INJURIES IN 2002

- **1,568** students required ER care for a school injury.
- **74** of those students were hospitalized.
- The average emergency room charge was **\$330**.
- The average cost of a hospital stay was **\$9,100**.
- The estimated **total cost** of ER and inpatient treatment was **\$1.2 million**.

PREVENTION TIPS

- Train all school staff and faculty in basic injury prevention.
- Train staff in first aid and CPR.
- Create a school safety committee to review problems and discuss prevention strategies.
- Develop written safety and behavior policies that provide consequences for rule-breakers.
- Make sure sports programs include: conditioning, personal protective equipment, adult supervision, enforcement of safety rules and an emergency medical plan.

SERIOUS SCHOOL INJURIES IN UTAH

The following are examples of incidents that occurred among students in grades K-12 from 1997-2002.

Prevention tips are highlighted below each incident.

Incident 1: A 5th grade boy was swinging during lunch recess when the swing broke and he fell. The student received medical attention and a CT scan to rule out a head injury and missed 1.5 days of school.

- Regularly inspect and maintain playground equipment to ensure it meets federal guidelines.

Incident 2: A pencil thrown by a student in a 5th grade classroom struck a fellow student in the eye. The pencil punctured his eye and doctors were forced to remove the lens. The student was absent 5 days.

- Educate students about the importance of safety.
- Establish and enforce safety guidelines in the classroom.

Incident 3: During a track meet, a group of junior high school boys threw a teammate into the air with a cheer. He fell and sustained fractures in both arms, one of which required surgery and the placement of steel rods to repair. The student was hospitalized for 1.5 days and was absent 3 days.

- Provide adequate adult supervision at all times.

Incident 4: In a parking area after school, a 10th grade student was standing on the back of a car that was being driven by a friend. The driver braked suddenly and the girl sustained a skull fracture when she was thrown off the car. She was transported to a hospital and was absent 11 days.

- Establish and enforce safety rules for school parking areas and encourage students to follow those guidelines.
- Consider discussing serious infractions with the student's parents.

Incident 5: During lunch recess, a group of children was playing on a metal playground gate that was left unlocked. As they swung the gate shut, it severed the left ring finger of a 1st grade boy. The student was hospitalized for 1 day.

- Train staff to be aware of potential playground hazards.
- Encourage children to play where play is intended.

PREVENTION TIPS

- Inspect the entire campus for safety hazards and correct them immediately.
- Supervise students in classrooms, hallways, physical education classes, sporting activities, and games.
- Teach health and safety at all grade levels.
- Implement proper classroom management and discipline, and reinforce positive student behaviors.
- Properly collect, review, and communicate information on school-related injuries.

SAFETY PAYS

By Alan Edwards, Director of Risk Management, State Board of Education

While the health and safety of students should be a primary focus for educators, school leaders should also remember that injuries affect the bottom line. The money we save through injury prevention comes directly back to districts and can help keep liability insurance premiums down.

As you think about injury prevention, remember to be vigilant. Have your teachers spread out around the schoolyard during recess so they can watch all play areas. Discourage dangerous behavior, and make sure all faculty and staff are always on the lookout for hazards, including broken glass, needles, animal waste and cigarette butts.

We're seeing a lot of effort by districts to make playgrounds safer. Thanks, and keep up the good work.

